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Western District of Texas**

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**LAW ENFORCEMENT ARREST 16 IN CONNECTION WITH
DOMINICAN/MEXICAN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION**

United States Attorney **Johnny Sutton**, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge **Kevin C. Whaley** and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent in Charge **Charles S. Harrison** announced today that 16 people have been arrested and 13 search warrants have been executed in San Antonio and Bridgeport, Connecticut in connection with an investigation into the activities of a Dominican/Mexican drug distribution ring.

Those arrested today and charged by a federal grand jury indictment with conspiracy to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine include:

Hector Ariste Bienvenido, a 51-year-old Dominican Republic National living in San Antonio. Bienvenido also faces four substantive charges of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Alfonso Rodriguez, a 40-year-old Mexican National living in San Antonio. Rodriguez also faces four substantive charges of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Hector Javier Melendez, a 43-year-old Mexican National living in San Antonio. Melendez also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Heriberto DeLeon Torres, a 31-year-old Mexican National living in San Antonio. Torres also faces two substantive charges of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Ricardo Vasquez, a 33-year-old Mexican National living in San Antonio. Vasquez also faces three substantive charges of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Juan Manuel Reyes, a 32-year-old Mexican National living in San Antonio. Reyes also faces two substantive charges of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Barbara Gonzalez, a 30-year-old Dominican Republic National living in Bridgeport, CT. Gonzalez also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Easton Gordon, a 34-year-old living in Bridgeport, CT. Gordon also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Bernadito Delrosario-Delossantos, a 34-year-old Dominican Republic National living in Bridgeport, CT. Delrosario-Delossantos also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

— more —

Three other defendants—charged in the conspiracy count—remain at large. They are:

Jesus Rivera, a 42-year-old Dominican Republic National living in Lawrence, MA. Rivera also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Augstin Rivas, a 52-year-old Dominican Republic National living in Lynn, MA. Rivas also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine; and,

William Rafael Rivera, a 30-year-old Dominican Republic National living in San Antonio. Rivera also faces one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine;

Four other defendants were previously arrested on related charges. They are:

Caridad Rivera, a 24-year-old resident of Bronx, NY and Carlos Ayala, a 25-year-old resident of Lawrence, MA. On July 24, 2003, Rivera and Ayala were stopped by Harris County (Texas) authorities for speeding. During the traffic stop, authorities discovered approximately 50 pounds of cocaine inside their vehicle. Rivera and Ayala were subsequently arrested and remain in custody. In addition to the conspiracy charge, Rivera and Ayala also face one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine; and,

Hector Aristy, Jr. (aka Hector Guzman-Montesino), a 24-year-old Dominican Republic National living in Lawrence, MA and Edwin Nieves, a 23-year-old Dominican Republic National. On September 28, 2003, authorities in Round Rock, Texas, arrested Aristy and Nieves. At the time of their arrest, authorities recovered approximately four-and-a-half kilograms of cocaine. In addition to the conspiracy charge, Aristy and Nieves also face one substantive charge of possession with intent to distribute cocaine.

A four-month-long investigation revealed that this organization, under the direction of Hector Aristy Bienvenido, used Bienvenido's business—Hector's Auto Body Shop—as a staging area for the distribution of cocaine. From June 1, 2003 until November 5, 2003, the organization utilized hidden compartments in vehicles to transport an estimated 50 kilograms of cocaine north to New Jersey, New York and Massachusetts. According to court documents, Alfonso Rodriguez is Bienvenido's source of supply for cocaine and is involved in the storage and distribution of multi-hundred kilogram quantities of cocaine on a monthly basis.

“Today's arrest should send a clear message the drugs and violence will never be tolerated in San Antonio. The United States Attorney's Office will do everything within its power to rid our community of drug dealers and the violent crime that follows them,” stated Johnny Sutton, United States Attorney, Western District of Texas.

Resulting from the same investigation, authorities arrested three other Mexican nationals this morning. Raul Wong Rodriguez, age 59, Juan Carlos Guerra-Atahyde, age 37, and Sergio Sanchez, age 31—all living in San Antonio—together with Ricardo Vasquez are all charged by a separate federal grand jury indictment with conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine and a substantive count of possession with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine. Vasquez and Rodriguez also face an additional substantive drug charge of possession with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine.

“Today we have witnessed the successful results of a joint and cooperative law enforcement effort to immobilize the transportation and distribution of illegal drugs coming in from Mexico and along the Southwest Border to the San Antonio community and other areas of the United States,” stated Kevin C. Whaley, Special Agent in Charge for the Drug Enforcement Administration. “Drug trafficking continues to plague our community and the safety of our neighborhoods, however, in partnership with state and local law enforcement, the DEA continues its efforts to identify and bring to justice those who threaten our communities.”

During today’s search warrants, authorities seized 49 kilograms of cocaine, approximately \$70,000 in cash and five assault rifles.

“The indictments and arrests of these individuals by a cooperative law enforcement effort demonstrates the benefit of pooling local, state and federal law enforcement resources to fight the smuggling and distribution of narcotics from our borders,” stated Charles “Shep” Harrison, ICE Special Agent in Charge, San Antonio.

Upon conviction, each defendant could receive up to life in federal prison. **An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence of guilt. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.**

The case is being investigated by agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration and United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement together with officers from the Alamo Area Narcotics Task Force, San Antonio Police Department, Bexar County Sheriffs Office, Seguin Police Department, Guadalupe County Sheriffs Office, South Texas High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Kendall County Sheriff’s Department, New Braunfels Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and United States Marshals Service. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Greg Surovic. This investigation continues.

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